

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0559

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 LA PAZ 4594

DEPARTMENT PASS WHITE HOUSE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: BL PFOR

SUBJ: REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT AND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON
MISSION TO BOLIVIA

1. SIRS: HAVING BEEN GIVEN YOUR CONFIDENCE IN ASSIGNING ME
AS AMBASSADOR TO BOLIVIA FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS AND EIGHT MONTHS,
I FEEL IT APPROPRIATE AT THE END OF MY MISSION TO FURNISH YOU A
REPORT THEREON AS WELL AS MY ESTIMATE OF THE CURRENT STATE OF OUR
RELATIONS WITH THIS COUNTRY.

2. WHEN I ARRIVED IN BOLIVIA ON NOVEMBER 30, 1969 THE COUNTRY WAS
IN A STATE OF FERMENT. ONLY SIX WEEKS BEFORE GEN. OVANDO HAD
FORCIBLY DEPOSED PRESIDENT SILES SALINAS WHO HAD CONSTITUTIONALLY
SUCCEEDED TO POWER ON THE DEATH OF GEM. BARRIENTOS IN APRIL.
OVANDO'S WAS A GOVERNMENT INCORPORATING MANY YOUNG AND RADICAL
MINISTERS. IT SOUGHT TO ESTABLISH A BASIS OF POWER IN THE EXTREME
LEFT WHILE MAINTAINING THE VITAL SUPPORT OF THE ARMED FORCES. ONE
OF ITS FIRST ACTS HAD BEEN THE DEMOGOGIC, ILL-CONSIDERED, AND ILL-
TIMED NATIONALIZATION OF THE GULF OIL CORPORATION PROPERTIES HERE.
ALSO MUCH ANTIPATHY WAS SHOWN TOWARD THE US AND IN THE EARLY MONTHS
TOWARD ME AS CERTAIN ELEMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT, THE MEDIA, THE
UNIONS AND UNIVERSITIES USED THIS MEANS TO APPEAL TO THE EXTREME
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LEFT. THESE ATTACKS INCLUDED THE PROPAGATION OF FALSE CHARGES THAT

I WAS AN AGENT OF THE CIA, ABOUT WHICH BOLIVIA HAD A PARTICULARLY PARANOIC ATTITUDE, AND WILD ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THE INTENTIONS OF THE US AND OF ITS AMBASSADOR IN THIS COUNTRY.

3. I NEVERTHELESS ENDEAVORED TO CONVEY AN ATTITUDE OF FRIENDSHIP FROM THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF THE US TOWARD THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF BOLIVIA, TO PROVIDE GOOD OFFICES TO FACILITATE A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION OF GULF PROBLEM AND, TO SHOW CLEARLY THAT THE US

RESPECTED BOLIVIAN SOVEREIGNTY, I ALSO TRIED TO AVOID MISTAKES WHICH WOULD HAVE AFFORDED OPPORTUNITY FOR THAT RELATIVELY SMALL NUMBER OF BOLIVIANS WHO WERE INTIMIDATING THEIR OWN SOCIETY, AND WHOSE OBJECTIVE

WAS TO DESTROY MY MISSION AND EVENTUALLY, I BELIEVE," TO BREAK RELATIONS WITH THE US.

4. THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION DETERIORATED DRASTICALLY DURING THE MONTHS OF THE OVANDO ADMINISTRATION AS HIS EFFORTS TO COURT THE LEFT ALARMED THE MORE CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND ERODED THE SUPPORT HE HAD WITH THAT INSTITUTION. NEVERTHELESS, A POSITIVE ACCOMPLISHMENT ACHIEVED IN AUGUST OF 1970 DURING OVANDO'S GOVERNMENT WAS THE BASIC AGREEMENT ON WHICH THE GULF OIL CO. NATIONALIZATION WAS SOLVED. BECAUSE BOLIVIA HAD NO REAL ALTERNATIVES, THE GENERAL OUTLINES OF THIS AGREEMENT WERE UPHELD DURING THE ENSUING AND MORE HOSTILE TORRES REGIME, AND IT WAS FINALLY COMPLETED DURING THE EARLY MONTHS OF THE BANZER REGIME WHICH CAME INTO POWER IN AUGUST, 1971.

5. DURING THE LATER MONTHS OF THE OVANDO REGIME THERE WAS MOUNTING TENSION BETWEEN THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE ARMED FORCES. THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE COUNTRY WAS VERY UNSETTLED WITH UNEXPLAINED MURDERS, BOMB EXPLOSIONS ALMOST EVERY NIGHT, "REVOLUTION" IN THE UNIVERSITY AND THE LAUNCHING IN JULY OF AN ILL-FATED, POORLY PLANNED STUDENT-BASED GUERRILLA EFFORT IN THE UPPER-BENI JUNGLE REGION. BY OCTOBER OF 1970 RELATIONS BETWEEN GEN. OVANDO AND THE ARMED FORCES HAD REACHED SUCH A CRITICAL POINT THAT GEN. MIRANDA, THEN COMMANDER OF THE ARMY, ATTEMPTED A COUP. IT WAS SUCH AN ILL-PLANNED, BUMBLING, STUMBLING

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EFFORT THAT, ALTHOUGH IT SUCCEEDED IN FORCING THE RESIGNATION OF GEN. OVANDO, IT RESULTED, AFTER ONE DAY OF EXTREME CONFUSION IN WHICH BOLIVIA ACTUALLY HAD FOUR "PRESIDENT", IN THE SURPRISING ACCESSION TO POWER OF GEN. JUAN JOSE TORRES. GEN. TORRES, WHO HAD BEEN CHIEF OF THE

ARMED FORCES UNDER OVANDO, HAD EARLIER BEEN FIRED AND REDUCED IN STATURE BECAUSE OF SUSPICION AROUSED BY HIS EXCESSIVE POLITICAL ACTIVITIES AND AMBITIONS. HE WAS ACTUALLY ATTEMPTING TO FLEE BOLIVIA

WHEN THE INCOMPETENCE OF THE MIRANDA EFFORT, AND THE DEFECTION OF THE AIR FORCE, PRESENTED HIM WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASSUME POWER. NO ONE WAS MORE SURPRISED THAN GEN. TORRES AND, BECAUSE HE HAD NO REAL FOLLOWING, HIS ADMINISTRATION OVER THE ENSUING NINE MONTHS WAS ONE OF INCREASING FRUSTRATION AND FAILURE. THE EMBASSY AT THE TIME REPORTED THAT

TORRES HAD NO VISIBLE MEANS OF SUPPORT AND WAS SUSTAINED IN POWER LARGELY AS A PAWN OF THREE GROUPS ATTEMPTING TO USE HIM, EACH TO OFFSET THE OTHER. THESE WERE, IN GENERAL TERMS, THE EXTREMIST LEADERSHIP OF THE LABOR UNIONS, THE UNIVERSITY AND THE MEDIA. UNDER TORRES THESE EXTREMISTS STEADILY INCREASED THEIR POWER TO THE POINT WHERE THE LAST MONTHS THERE WAS AN EFFORT TO FORM A "PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY" AND A GOVERNMENT PATTERNED AFTER SOME OF THE INSTITUTIONS AND CHARACTER OF THE SOVIET UNION AND CUBA. MANY BOLIVIANS THOUGHT THAT BOLIVIA WAS ON THE VERGE OF BECOMING ANOTHER CUBA, AND IT WAS THIS FEAR WHICH RESULTED IN THE DETERMINATION OF GROUPS THERETOFORE ANTIPATHETIC EACH TO THE OTHER TO JOIN IN WHAT BECAME THE SUCCESSFUL REVOLUTION WHICH PROJECTED COL. HUGO BANZER SUAREZ INTO POWER.

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6. THE MAINTENANCE OF AN EFFECTIVE US PRESENCE AND THE CONDUCT OF OUR RELATIONS DURING THIS PERIOD BECAME INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT. THERE OCCURRED TWO ADDITIONAL NATIONALIZATIONS (INTER-

NATIONAL METALS PROCESSING COMPANY AND MINA MATILDE) AS WELL AS
ATTACKS

ON US INSTITUTIONS WHICH ENDANGERED OUR PERSONNEL AND CAUSED US MUCH
LOSS OF PROPERTY. AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER ALL OF OUR CULTURAL CENTERS
IN BOLIVIA WERE ATTACKED AND TAKEN OVER, PERMANENTLY IN THE CASE OF
LA PAZ. AS A RESULT OF EXTREMIST PRESSURE TO WHICH THE GOVERN-
MENT WEAKLY YIELDED THE PEACE CORPS WAS FORCED OUT OF BOLIVIA IN
MAY OF 1971. ALSO, THERE WAS EVERY INDICATION THAT THE US MILITARY
GROUP WOULD BE THE NEXT TO GO, AND SOON. HAPPILY, IN THIS PERIOD,
A VERY WISE DECISION WAS MADE BY THE PRESIDENT NOT TO SELL SURPLUS
STOCKS OF TIN. I AND ALL MY COLLEAGUES WERE CONVINCED THAT
HAD THE DECISION BEEN TO THE CONTRARY A GRAVE SECURITY THREAT TO
ALL AMERICANS AND AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS HERE WOULD HAVE RESULTED,
AND THIS COULD HAVE SET INTO MOTION A CHAIN OF EVENTS LEADING TO
WHAT THE EXTREMISTS REALLY WANTED. ALSO, THE EMBASSY RECEIVED
PROMPT AND EFFECTIVE SUPPORT FOR ITS URGENT RECOMMENDATIONS, MADE
IN JUNE, 1971, THAT A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN THE MILITARY
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM PRESENTED THE ONLY POSSIBILITY OF AVOIDING THE
EJECTION OF THE MILITARY GROUP. WE CONSIDERED IT ESSENTIAL TO
MAINTAIN A PRESENCE AND CONTACT WITH THIS INSTITUTION WHICH WAS
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(AND LARGELY STILL REMAINS) THE ONLY ONE WITH STABILITY, ESTABLISHED
TRADITIONS AND ULTIMATE POWER IN BOLIVIA. THE AUTHORIZATION OF
THIS IMPRESSIVE NEW ASSISTANCE, WHICH I THEN OFFERED TO GEN. TORRES,
ACCOMPLISHED ITS PURPOSES; BUT THE ULTIMATE BENEFICIARY WAS PRESIDENT
BANZER AND THE NEW REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT. THE COMBINATION OF THE
DECISION ON TIN AND THE INCREASED MAP OFFER ENABLED US TO HANG ON HERE

AND MAINTAIN A PRESENCE UNTIL BOLIVIANS THEMSELVES RESCUED THEIR
COUNTRY FROM THE BRINK OF DISASTER, AND PRESENTED US THEN WITH NEW
OPPORTUNITIES FOR EFFECTIVE DIPLOMACY.

7. THE REVOLUTION OF AUGUST, 1971 BROUGHT INTO POWER A GOVERNMENT
COMPOSED OF THE TWO LARGEST POLITICAL PARTIES, THE MNR AND THE FSB,
WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE ARMED FORCES AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR. THE
GLUE WHICH CEMENTED THIS STRANGE COALITION, AND WHICH STILL KEEPS IT
TOGETHER, WAS A COMMON FEAR THAT BOLIVIA WAS ON THE BRINK OF BE-
COMING A COMMUNIST NATION. RECOGNIZING THE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED BY
THIS IMPRESSIVE, EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM WHICH WOULD NURTURE
THIS NEW TREND AND HELP IT TO SUCCEED. THESE RECOMMENDATIONS
RECEIVED PROMPT SUPPORT FROM THE DEPARTMENT AND THE HIGHEST
ELEMENTS OF OUR GOVERNMENT. THUS FAR THIS PROGRAM HAS RESULTED
IN NEARLY \$100 MILLION IN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO THE BANZER GOVERN-
MENT. IT, TOGETHER WITH SUSTAINED MILITARY AID, HAS BEEN
INSTRUMENTAL IN ENCOURAGING THE PRESIDENT TO TAKE SUCH COURAGEOUS
STEPS AS THE DEVALUATION OF THE BOLIVIAN PESO AND THE ECONOMIC
STABILIZATION PROGRAM. THE SUCCESS OF THESE UNDERTAKINGS WILL BE
VITAL IN ESTABLISHING THE BASIS UPON WHICH THIS COUNTRY CAN
ACCELERATE ITS RATE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PROVIDE A

BASIS FOR GREATER PROGRESS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE.

8. PRESIDENT BANZER, PROVING HIMSELF TO BE AN INCREASINGLY SKILLFUL POLITICAL LEADER, HAS MANAGED WITH SOME DIFFICULTY TO KEEP TOGETHER THIS BASIC COALITION AND TO RETAIN THE ESSENTIAL SUPPORT OF THE ARMED FORCES. MOREOVER, THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE COUNTRY HAS BEEN DRASTICALLY CHANGED FROM ONE OF HATEFULNESS AND UNCERTAINTY TO ONE OF RELATIVE PEACE, TRANQUILITY AND VISIBLE PROGRESS. BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT HAS CONSIDERED ITSELF ESSENTIALLY TO BE AT WAR WITH EXTREMISTS OF THE FAR LEFT, AND BECAUSE ITS INSTITUTIONS ARE NOT HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED OR WELL-FORMED, THERE HAS BEEN A PROBLEM OF SOME POLITICAL REPRESSION DURING THIS TIME. A NUMBER OF BOLIVIAN HAVE GONE INTO EXILE AND MANY HUNDREDS HAVE BEEN PROCESSED ON CONFIDENTIAL

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POLITICAL CHARGES. BUT IT HAS BEEN THE CONSTANT INTENT OF THE GOVERNMENT TO REDUCE THIS PROBLEM. AS OF NOW WE BELIEVE THERE ARE FEWER THAN 200 PEOPLE CLASSIFIABLE AS POLITICAL PRISONERS, AND STEPS HAVE RECENTLY BEEN TAKEN TO TRY THEM ALL IN THE REGULAR COURTS. THIS PROCESS, WHICH BEGAN A COUPLE OF MONTHS AGO, HAS RESULTED IN THE LIBERATION OF A NUMBER OF PEOPLE AND THE LEGAL CONVICTION OF OTHERS.

9. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT THE BANZER GOVERNMENT, CONTRARY TO HOW IT IS OFTEN PORTRAYED IN THE US PRESS, IS NOT A "MILITARY" GOVERNMENT. ACTUALLY, THE FRENTE POPULAR NACIONALISTA (FPN), UNITING AS IT DOES THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND THE ARMED FORCES, HAS GIVEN BOLIVIA A GOVERNMENT WHICH, ALTHOUGH DE FACTO, ENJOYS A BROADER POPULAR BASE THAN HAS ANY GOVERNMENT IN RECENT BOLIVIAN HISTORY. UNTIL RECENTLY ONLY THREE OF 18 CABINET POSTS WERE HELD BY THE MILITARY; TODAY THEY HAVE FIVE OF THE 18. MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE PRESIDENT HAS RECENTLY ANNOUNCED INTENT TO RESTORE CONSTITUTIONAL RULE BY HOLDING ELECTIONS IN 1974. THIS CONTRASTS, FOR EXAMPLE, WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF PERU WHICH IS 100 PERCENT MILITARY AND, AFTER NEARLY FIVE YEARS, DOES NOT EVEN TALK ABOUT CONSTITUTIONALIZATION. ALSO TO BE NOTED AMONG THE BANZER GOVERNMENT'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS WAS THE FINAL SETTLEMENT NOT ONLY OF THE GULF NATIONALIZATION, BUT THE SETTLEMENT AS WELL BY AMICABLE AGREEMENT THE PAYMENT OF COMPENSATION, OF THE IMPC AND THE MINA MATILDE CASES. EVEN THE PROBLEM OF THE STOLEN (DURING THE TORRES REGIME) AMERICAN/BOLIVIAN BINATIONAL CULTURAL CENTER IN LA PAZ WAS SETTLED WITH ADVANTAGE TO US BY LEGAL NATIONALIZATION AND CASH COMPENSATION. TODAY, BY WAY OF ILLUSTRATION OF THE SIRACUSA

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ATTITUDE OF THE BOLIVIAN PEOPLE WHEN NOT INTIMIDATED, I AM HAPPY TO SAY OUR CENTERS IN LA PAZ, COCHABAMBA AND SANTA CRUZ ARE THRIVING AS NEVER BEFORE. THE LA PAZ CENTER NOW HAS AN ENROLLMENT OF OVER 1,400, MORE THAN DOUBLE ITS PREVIOUS HIGH.

10. I HAVE BEEN DEEPLY GRATEFUL FOR THE SUPPORT THIS MISSION HAS ALWAYS RECEIVED FROM WASHINGTON--IN THE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TIMES IN THE FIRST YEAR AND A HALF AS WELL AS THE FAR BETTER TIMES OF THE LAST 22 MONTHS. I FEEL I AM LEAVING BOLIVIA ON A POSITIVE NOTE AT A TIME WHEN OUR RELATIONS ARE EXCELLENT. MORE IMPORTANTLY, IT IS A TIME IN WHICH THERE IS GOOD REASON FOR THE OPTIMISTIC BELIEF THAT IF THE CURRENT TRENDS CAN BE CONTINUED BOLIVIA CAN ESTABLISH A BASIS FOR PROGRESS WHICH WILL HELP IT TO EMERGE FROM BEING THE SECOND POOREST NATION IN LATIN AMERICA. ACTUALLY, THIS IS A VERY RICH COUNTRY WITH A GOOD AND HARD-WORKING PEOPLE; BUT BAD GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL INSTABILITY THROUGHOUT ITS HISTORY HAVE PREVENTED IT FROM ACHIEVING A BETTER SITUATION FOR ALL OF ITS PEOPLE. THERE ARE RISKS FOR ONE WHO, LOOKING BACKWARD IN A COUNTRY WHICH HAS HAD SOME 180 GOVERNMENTS OR MORE IN 148 YEARS OF INDEPENDAGNCE, AND FOR WHICH THE AVERAGE LIFE OF PRESIDENTS IN OFFICE IS ABOUT NINE MONTHS, PREDICTS THE POSSIBILITY OF FUTURE STABILITY AND PROGRESS. NEVERTHELESS, THERE ARE HISTORIC MOMENTS

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OF OPPORTUNITY AND I BELIEVE THAT SUCH A MOMENT MAY WELL BE AT HAND FOR BOLIVIA. THE NATURAL RESOURCES OF THE COUNTRY ARE ENORMOUS AND ITS LAND AREA IN COMPARISON TO ITS POPULATION IS ALSO LARGE. IT IS POOREST IN TECHNICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ABILITY--

IN TRAINED HUMAN RESOURCES--IN LARGE PART BECAUSE INSTABILITY AND LACK OF OPPORTUNITY HAVE FORCED THE EMIGRATION OF LITERALLY THOUSANDS OF THE BEST TRAINED BOLIVIANS. A PERIOD OF STABILITY AND GROWTH, I BELIEVE, WILL NOT ONLY ATTRACT CAPITAL AND PROMOTE GROWTH; VERY IMPORTANTLY, IT CAN CAUSE THE TRAINED YOUNG PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTRY TO REMAIN HERE AND MAKE THEIR NATURAL CONTRIBUTION TO ITS FUTURE. PRESIDENT BANZER'S FORTHCOMING STATE VISIT TO WASHINGTON WILL, I BELIEVE, BE OF GREAT IMPORTANCE IN HELPING TO KEEP GOING THE POSITIVE TREND OF DEVELOPMENTS HERE, POLITICALLY, ECONOMICALLY AND SOCIALLY. WHILE THERE ARE AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE MANY PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES, IN THE BROADEST SENSE I BELIEVE THE PRESENT CURRENT OF AFFAIRS AND PRINCIPLES TO BE THE BEST FOR BOLIVIA AT THIS TIME.

11. I ALSO BELIEVE THE POLICY NOW BEING FOLLOWED BY OUR GOVERNMENT IN BOLIVIA IS THE RIGHT ONE. I HAVE TRIED IN EVERY WAY WITHIN MY POWER TO SEE THAT IT REFLECTED THIS ADMINISTRATION'S CONCEPT OF MATURE PARTNERSHIP WHICH I SINCERELY BELIEVE IS THE RIGHT ONE FOR OUR TIMES. I ALSO BELIEVE ON THE BASIS OF ABUNDANT EVIDENCE THAT THE BOLIVIAN PEOPLE ARE FUNDAMENTALLY FRIENDLY TO THE US, GRATEFUL FOR OUR HELP AND WILLING TO SHOW IT, AS NOW, WHEN THEY ARE NOT INTIMIDATED AS THEY WERE BY A RELATIVELY SMALL HANDFUL OF THEIR COMPATRIOTS DURING THE CHAOTIC AND NEARLY ANARCHIC DAYS OF THE OVANDO AND TORRES REGIMES. BUT THEY ARE AT THE SAME TIME A PROUD AND SENSITIVE PEOPLE, AND THE GIVER/RECEIVER RELATIONSHIP WHICH CHARACTERIZES MUCH OF OUR CONTACT IS A DELICATE ONE. ANY US AMBASSADOR AND HIS STAFF, THEREFORE, WOULD DO WELL TO WORK AS QUIETLY AND UNOBTUSIVELY AS POSSIBLE, AND TO INTERVENE AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE INTO THE INTERNAL WORKINGS OF THE COUNTRY AND ITS GOVERNMENT. SINCERITY, INTEGRITY AND FRIENDSHIP, ACCOMPANIED BY "LOW PROFILE" SHOULD BE THE RULE.

12. IN CLOSING THIS REPORT I WISH TO EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE FOR THE CONFIDENCE WHICH HAS BEEN DISPLAYED IN ME AS AMBASSADOR. I ALSO WISH TO RECOGNIZE THE VITAL CONTRIBUTION WHICH HAS BEEN MADE OVER THE YEARS OF MY MISSION BY THE HIGHLY TALENTED, DEDICATED
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AND COURAGEOUS COLLEAGUES THAT I HAVE HAD, MEN AND WOMEN, IN ALL AREAS OF THIS MISSION. THEIR PERFORMANCE AND THAT OF THEIR WIVES AND FAMILIES, MUCH OF IT IN TIMES OF TENSION AND GREAT DIFFICULTY, ENHANCED IN THIS COUNTRY WHERE LIVING IN HALF AN ATMOSPHERE AT OVER 12,500 FEET ITSELF PRESENTS CHALLENGES ENOUGH--HAS BEEN TRULY OUTSTANDING, A REAL CREDIT TO OUR NATION AND A GREAT SOURCE OF PRIDE TO ME AS AMBASSADOR.

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